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ABSTRACT

This document profiles 10 European programs that exemplify good practice in building skills and qualifications among employees of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The programs profiled are as follows: (1) TRICTSME (a program providing World Wide Web-based information and communication technologies training for SMEs in manufacturing); (2) CORCITSEME (a project that examined corporate citizenship for SMEs); (3) Teacher as Consultant (a CD-ROM-based program to help SMEs define their training needs); (4) MATCH (a project to make recruitment easier for small companies); (5) Europrise (a youth entrepreneurship model for Europe); (6) Criare (a program providing entrepreneurial training for new business success); (7) a program providing training in e-commerce for procurement and distribution; (8) a study of firms from the metal working and mechanics sectors in France, Germany, and Italy that focused on SMEs' training needs and developed a model for integrating vocational training into an SME's overall business strategy and human resources management; (9) European Masters in Multimedia (a program during which a curriculum to build skills in the knowledge-based economy was developed and used at eight universities and training institutes across Europe); and (10) a program to help SMEs prepare for environmental certification. A list of 27 ongoing projects with a focus on SMEs is included. (MN)

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Leonardo da Vinci

Series: Good practices (7)

Building skills and qualifications
among SME employees

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A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet.
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Our knowledge and professional skills must be regularly updated if we are to meet the new requirements of the economy and the labour market, so now, more than ever before, lifelong learning is essential for all. The Leonardo da Vinci programme, which has been the chief Community instrument in the field of vocational training since 1995, provides concrete responses to these new needs.

The results of the projects supported under this programme deserve to be more widely disseminated among the vocational training community, the social partners and policy-makers. They must subsequently be adapted to other target groups, developed, used in other professional environments, and introduced into the national systems.

To this end the Directorate-General for Education and Culture, which manages the Leonardo da Vinci programme, has prepared a series of brochures 'Leonardo da Vinci – Good practices', to inform the public of the programme's results. These brochures are designed to familiarise as many people as possible with examples of good practices under the programme. The examples presented here have been selected for their impact and their originality. I am pleased to present this brochure from the Education and Culture DG, which I hope you will find interesting.

Viviane Reding
Member of the European Commission
responsible for Education and Culture

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BUILDING SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS AMONG SME EMPLOYEES

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) make up about 99 % of all enterprises registered in the European Union. They contribute to a significant share of the EU's economy (60 % of added value business) and employ a considerable proportion (67 %) of the Union's labour force. Since the 1970s, the well-being and competitiveness of SMEs have depended on the use of modern technologies and efficient production methods. In recent times, another factor has come to play an important role: building skills and qualifications among employees in the sector.

We can no longer speak of SME productivity and professional development of employees as separate concerns. With globalisation and open markets, these two ingredients must now be considered as mutually dependent components within the same formula. Improving professional training for employees is therefore vital for the growth of the European Union's 19 million SMEs.

It is in this context that the Leonardo da Vinci programme has provided European SMEs with a repertoire of human resource management practices carried out across a wide range of countries. The first phase of Leonardo, the EU's vocational training programme, lasted from 1995 to 1999. The programme, which has the objective of fostering innovative and transnational vocational training projects in Member States, entered into its second phase in 2000 and will continue until 2006. In view of this, it is important to emphasise the continuity of the European Union's vocational training strategy as well as to point out the various projects which have reinforced this strategy. This is why we have chosen to include a list of projects, which are underway at the moment, at the end of the brochure.

This brochure presents a number of good practices and experiences selected according to the quality and impact of the projects. It also introduces the most important themes in professional training for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Leonardo da Vinci projects targeted towards SMEs have contributed to three specific objectives. Firstly, they have imparted the fundamental skills required by the market to employees. Secondly, SME managers have gained the means to evaluate the needs of their companies and find ways of satisfying those needs. And lastly, SMEs have improved their performance on the increasingly competitive and global market.

For further information
on the Leonardo da Vinci programme,
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Theme: ICT

TRICTSME – Web-based ICT training for SMEs in manufacturing

TRICTSME was a two-year pilot project that produced a web-based intelligent training and support system targeted towards SME managers in the manufacturing sector to instruct them in the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), especially the Internet, electronic data interchange and e-commerce.

E-commerce, a challenge to SMEs

E-commerce presents enormous opportunities as well as challenges to companies both large and small. It has a significant impact on how business is conducted and managed. Yet deploying e-commerce depends on a good understanding of ICTs within the workforce. Lack of understanding and skills in using ICTs will significantly slow a company's economic development.

Larger companies are generally better able to respond to this challenge. They have greater internal expertise to call upon and thus can gain significantly from the benefits of ICTs. By contrast, the SME sector tends to lack internal expertise resources and often requires additional help and support. SMEs are the slowest to embrace e-commerce and, when they are key suppliers for other businesses, their delay in taking up e-commerce can inhibit the development of a whole business network. Findings show that only 15 % of SMEs in manufacturing use e-commerce, and that 80 % of those carry out less than 5 % of their business transactions via e-commerce.

Implementation, a business issue

TRICTSME aimed to find a solution to these issues. Launched on 1 December 1998, the project objectives were to establish the nature of common problems and training needs for SMEs in adopting ICTs, to identify the sources of professional knowledge and expertise needed to overcome these barriers, and to design effective training modules.

A key element in the project was based on the recognition that the challenge presented by e-commerce is a business issue rather than a technical one. Thus the most appropriate training modules needed by SME managers are not on technology, but on how to review business processes in order to develop the most appropriate implementation strategy.

Web-based training system developed

TRICTS was completed on 5 December 2001, and resulted in the development of WITS, a web-based intelligent training and advisory system for SMEs. WITS is designed to help SME managers understand emerging ICT technologies and to give an outline of the strategic and managerial issues of technology implementation.

An interactive system, WITS functions both on the web and on a CD-ROM. It assists managers in conducting their business analysis and developing their own e-commerce strategy and implementation plan, using interactive communications built on the system's own knowledge base.

WITS enables users to obtain training on ICTs at any time and at any location, to understand how such technologies work for SMEs, and to explore the benefits these technologies can offer. It also allows them to assess their current business performance via simple questionnaires, to conduct *'what if'* scenario analyses with WITS interactive advice, and to develop business implementation strategies.

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Corporate Citizenship

CORCITESME – Investigating corporate citizenship for SMEs

CORCITESME examined the lack of corporate citizenship activities among SMEs across Europe and sought to find reasons for this. The project acquired a new and better understanding of SME needs in instituting policies that could be hailed as socially responsible.

SMEs and corporate citizenship

Good corporate citizenship is considered a highly desirable trait within business and industry. Companies that choose to put additional effort into promoting social responsibility and taking an active role within their social, political and environmental milieu are viewed positively by both citizens and governments.

Yet few SMEs seem to get involved in such corporate citizenship programmes. While larger enterprises tend to have highly complex social underpinnings (distinctive business cultures, symbolic structures, recognisable rituals, etc.), SMEs generally seem to possess a less visible culture that is often heavily centred on the personality of the business owner.

Encouragement needed

CORCITESME commenced on 1 December 1998 with the intention of investigating the phenomenon of corporate citizenship, to see if there are ways in which the practice of social responsibility among SMEs could be encouraged. Research was carried out through surveys, interviews and workshops among a broad spectrum of businesses in six countries, namely Denmark, Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

Examining best practices

A survey was carried out among the managers of some 124 European SMEs, which coincided with a series of interviews with key professionals in larger companies that laid claim to the practice of good corporate citizenship. The responses received enabled the project partners to develop basic hypotheses regarding SMEs' orientation towards corporate citizenship, including an analysis of key determining factors.

The project looked for best practice among enterprises practising corporate citizenship, and drew up a list of some 119 enterprises that could be labelled as 'best practitioners'. Further contacts were made with these organisations, producing at the end of the process satisfactory documentation for about 50 large European enterprises.

Strategic to main business activity

The CORCITESME partners held a closing seminar on 27 June 2001 in Copenhagen, where the study's final report was presented and discussed with an audience that included a number of experts on corporate citizenship issues.

Among the interesting conclusions presented was the fact that, while the social activities of large enterprises tend to have a wide impact affecting other countries and other local communities, the tendency of SMEs seems to be that of being more active in local contexts.

Another conclusion drawn was that corporate citizenship is practised not only when it brings some market advantage, but also when it is strategic to an organisation's main business or when it is in line with the 'vision' held by key decision-makers inside the organisation.

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'Teacher as consultant' – Helping SMEs define their training needs

'Teacher as consultant' has developed a simple, user-friendly tool to help time- and resource-strapped SMEs work out their needs for employee training. The project culminated in a CD-ROM guide adapted to six different European markets, each in the native language of the country concerned.

Training for SMEs – luxury or necessity?

Whatever the industry sector – construction, security services, wood and furniture, industrial cleaning, transport, heating techniques, hotels and restaurants or the environment – what unites the companies involved is the fact that many of them are very small businesses. These are enterprises that scrape by with slim margins and no slack time.

For most SMEs, training is still seen as a luxury. Employee time is precious. What time is there for anything that is not absolutely necessary to the here and now? Yet this attitude can be a false economy because employee training can bring many tangible benefits. Efficiency can increase as better use is made of equipment and systems; technological change is easier to handle because employees have up-to-date skills; and the workforce becomes more flexible as their competence increases. But how do such companies find out what training best matches their needs?

Adapting training advice to different EU markets

The 'Teacher as consultant' project brought the resources of the education sector to bear on the problem. What methods and structures would be needed for vocational trainers to provide training services on a consultancy-basis to SMEs?

Beginning in December 1999, the project gathered ideas from six partners, all highly competent providers of vocational training.

The starting point was a training manual from an earlier Adapt project. This manual was developed from a survey involving 65 different SMEs in Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland and Portugal. The companies were vocational training organisations and product or services suppliers.

In the more recent Leonardo project, the firms were invited to describe in detail the relevance of the existing manual's contents to their training needs. Their responses were then used to adapt the contents to the target markets by implementing a common core of advice, plus country-specific information for the different markets and legislative frameworks of the countries concerned.

Simplicity the key to success

By the close of the project in May 2001, 'Teacher as consultant' had developed an effective tool, in six different languages, to assist SMEs in defining the training needs of their employees. The product's very simplicity, a user-friendly CD-ROM that offers simple and relevant solutions, is the key to its success.

The project concluded with presentation ceremonies that attracted widespread interest from governments, academia and the European press. In Poland, the Vice-Minister for Education and Training asked to be present at the ceremony in Slupsk. In Palermo, Sicily, a senior academic stated that he had never seen a product 'more European in its vision or its adaptability to differing needs across the EU'. In Greece, the ceremony attracted widespread press and national radio coverage, and in Latvia, the tool was described as 'exactly what we need'.

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Recruitment

MATCH – Making recruitment easier for small companies

One of the greatest challenges for entrepreneurs and small business owners wishing to expand is attracting and selecting new employees who can really help the business grow. In a small team, it can be disastrous if the new employee doesn't fit in with the team. For people whose time is already at a premium, however, the additional work needed to find the right new staff can be a huge obstacle.
While larger companies have reliable, standardised recruitment policies and human resources staff to take care of new entrants, most SMEs have to start from scratch to develop a selection process. Daunted by the task, many entrepreneurs choose to keep things simple by limiting the company size. Now, however, help is on hand with a new tool to simplify recruitment.

Matching candidates' abilities to company needs
The MATCH project aimed to establish a set of simple recruitment methods to assist small businesses. Three project partners worked on developing a simple, standardised approach to effective recruitment for SMEs.

They began by designing a set of requirement profiles for specific firms, and a sequence of interview questions for applicants that would reveal both their aptitudes for the work and their interests and attitudes to find out if they would match the companies' requirements.

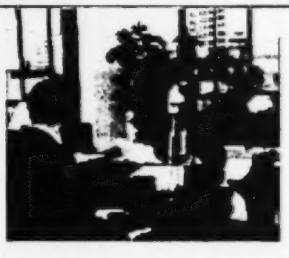
Two questionnaires were designed: one for SMEs to describe the company's place of work and its requirements, the other to provide a profile of each applicant. The answers provided by candidates were matched against recruiters' needs using a Microsoft Excel-based computer program. The results of the matching process can be displayed on-screen using a system of scales to show how closely the individual candidate's answers match the company's requirements.

By testing the questionnaires with thousands of young people and conducting extensive interviews with the entrepreneurs doing the recruiting, they were able to refine or simplify the questions used in the process. While early questionnaires used old-fashioned pen and paper, a demonstration version was subsequently developed on CD-ROM.

Includes the human values into the match
MATCH project results have been generally well received by the business owners who tried out the product:

'Entrepreneurs liked the product because, for the first time, a recruitment product explores the human values of the profile-matching process, not just the hard facts', says project manger Leo Hödl. 'When a business owner is looking for a new person for the company, what he really wants to know is if that person can fit into the team. This is more important than details of qualifications, abilities, etc.'

Importantly, the participants found that, while the computer-aided profile-matching process is a great help to decision making, the interview process itself is still best carried out on a personal basis. The results were found to be more consistent when a single person, trained in the process, carried out the interviews with applicants.



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Europrise – A youth entrepreneurship model for Europe

Europrise was started by the Nordland county administration in the northern part of Norway to increase the entrepreneurial skills of unemployed young people, especially those in the remoter parts of Europe. The project has helped a number of young people across Europe by motivating them and giving them the skills they need to create work and business opportunities for themselves within their communities.

Young people leaving remote communities
With the decline of traditional industries, many young people today enter the changing job market ill-equipped to find a place in the world of work. Youth unemployment can lead to severe depopulation, especially in the remoter parts of Europe, where young people need to move away from home to find opportunities for more advanced education.

Once they have gained their qualifications, training or work experience, it can be difficult to entice them back, as such communities do not offer opportunities for young people to work or to advance themselves.

Stimulate development of micro-enterprises
The key objectives of Europrise were to find ways to combat unemployment – especially in these remoter communities – and to stimulate the development of micro-enterprises that could use local resources. The project was resourced by funds from the Leonardo da Vinci programme and local county councils, to develop a learning and training programme for young entrepreneurs.

The target group was young unemployed people in the age range 18–30. The project planned to:

- set up a junior enterprise learning and training model in entrepreneurship;
- develop a curriculum for the model;
- produce a best-practice manual on entrepreneurship training;
- disseminate the results.

Built on the model of the family unit
The project methodology was built around the idea of the family unit, with a promoter or coordination unit (the mother), a senior enterprise (the supporting father) and a junior enterprise (the growing child). Family units were set up in each of the partner countries of Germany, Ireland, Norway, Scotland and Sweden.

An extended family of grandmothers, grandfathers, uncles, aunts and other relatives surrounded the basic family unit. These roles were filled by the local and regional authorities, local businesses and any other actors interested in the scheme.

After recruitment, young entrepreneurs spent around six months within their respective senior enterprises, studying the different aspects of the business while developing their own business ideas. They then had to develop their business plan and launch their own enterprise.

In all, some 16 enterprises were established across a range of business sectors. They included:

- production and marketing of a vacuum-based pump for the oil industry in Sweden;
- a graphic design workshop in Scotland;
- data processing training in Portugal;
- sales of adventure travel activities in Munich;
- a travel service, based on musical events, in northern Norway.

A European entrepreneurship model
The Europrise project received the IPN/CBC global best award for the best 'Life-long learning' project in 1998. A multiplier project, Europrise Multiply has followed, to disseminate a common European entrepreneurship learning and training model and best-practice manual across Europe.
Of the 54 students who started on the project, all were either in work or education when the project finished. A total of 36 talented young people have gained entrepreneurship skills that will stand them in good stead in their future working lives. In addition to this, the framework of a youth credit model for young entrepreneurs has been developed to promote the cause of entrepreneurship among young people.

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Mentorship

Criare – Providing entrepreneurial training for new business success

Criare finds ways of delivering training and follow-up advice for Europe's would-be entrepreneurs. The project has helped create several new businesses, and fostered a new understanding of the need to support new businesses during the critical start-up phase.

Starting a new business can be tough

Launching a new business can be tough. Even someone with a good idea that has excellent market potential can find the barriers to transforming the idea into a successful business insurmountable. It is not enough to know your product, you also have to learn about the legal, administrative and financial issues involved in operating a business successfully.

Across Europe, the process is often further complicated by the sheer number of administrative obstacles that a potential entrepreneur has to overcome. Many ideas have fallen by the wayside because the business start-up process is just too complicated.

Developing a business training methodology

Criare was launched with five partners on 5 April 1999 in a bid to deal with these issues. The first task was to investigate business start-up practices in each of the partner countries. Some organisations needed more help than others – business start-up presented a greater challenge in Lithuania and Romania, for example, because of the lack of a tradition of private enterprise in these countries.

In the second part of the project, partners selected the three areas they considered most important for training. Then the training staff for each country were given guidance in each of the selected areas:

- registration issues and legal entity formation;
- marketing (help with choosing the right product and the right product placement for the market);
- general management, finances, dealing with business stakeholders, suppliers, etc.

The training began in each country with a three-day introduction for some 39 selected participants within the training organisations. These sessions were followed by three to four months of discussions within the training organisations, both in groups and through individual consultation, to enable participants to develop their ideas. Finally, participants were given assistance by project partners when approaching commercial banks to obtain start-up funding.

New recognition of the need for support

When the project closed on 5 April 2001, some key objectives had been achieved and, just as importantly, Criare had helped develop an understanding, within the larger private and governmental organisations, of the difficulties faced by new entrepreneurs.

The Criare scheme of training would-be entrepreneurs has enabled these young hopefuls to approach commercial banks for financial backing with proof of their abilities and of their dedication to achieving results. As a result of the experience gained, one major bank in Portugal, BNU-Empresas, has now completely reorganised its strategic support process for new business start-ups.

The project may also have had an influence on government policy. In Portugal, for example, the seven or eight departments that previously dealt with business registration issues have been combined to form a single centre for business start-ups. Launching future businesses will be that much easier as a result.

CRIARE – successful start-ups

Portugal:
- a new bookseller's,
- a business commercialising equipment for hospitals,
- a business involved in recycled goods delivery,

Romania:
- a new funerals enterprise;

Lithuania:
- an agency for upmarket clothing rental;

Spain:
- a virtual art gallery, a building cleaning firm,
- a law consultancy,
- a decor and restoration specialist,
- a virtual library.

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E-commerce

Training in e-commerce for procurement / distribution

E-commerce technologies have the potential to offer small and medium-sized companies both wider business opportunities and reduced costs – new business opportunities from greater choice in an emerging global marketplace, with simplified distribution channels reducing the cost of production and delivery.
However, these new technologies bring their own challenges. New business functions restructure the value chain, replacing traditional commercial roles with innovative value-added services such as brokerage, searching and referral. These are novel concepts to the staff of many traditionally-minded smaller enterprises, and vocational training is often required if the potential of e-commerce is to be exploited to the full.

An e-commerce training aid
The project partners involved in 'e-commerce for procurement/distribution' aimed to develop a training aid for SME employees that would help them master new developments in e-commerce and put best practice examples into use quickly. Staff would need training not only in online communication, but also in new internal processes such as integrated communication technologies and customer information systems.

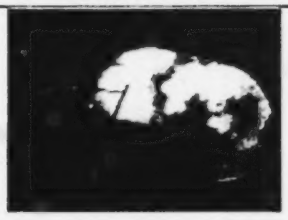
To this end, the partners developed a training programme based around the following modules:

- the Internet as a marketing medium of the future;
- new marketing strategies in procurement and distribution;
- customised individual relationships with customers and suppliers;
- integration into the internal and external business process;
- conversion of best-practice examples into concrete operational parameters.

The initial project phase during 1999 focused on developing the concept and the curricula to be included in the modules. During the latter stages in 2000 and 2001, the learning materials were developed, as well as testing of the lesson plans for the five modules and elaboration of the concept into a working model.

Results
During the final phase of the project, the partners mastered the layout for delivery of a CD-ROM version of the training materials and produced the contents in two versions, English and German. Analysis of the results of the module testing indicated that the course content is well-suited to the training of both technical and high-level personnel within companies.

As the course curricula were developed with a modular structure, the training programme is capable of further refinement as e-commerce technologies advance.



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Evaluation of training needs

Developing a training plan – From benchmarking to operational training

SMEs are expected to play an increasingly important role in future employment markets as globalisation and decentralisation increase opportunities for smaller companies. Yet a global market also means new competition for many smaller enterprises that in the past have been accustomed to operating in local markets only.

For continuing success, SMEs need simple and effective tools to assess their market situation and their competitiveness. Following diagnosis of their strengths and weaknesses, they need relevant vocational training to help their employees meet the growing demands upon them.

Enabling self-diagnosis for SMEs

The project, 'From benchmarking to an operational training plan', focused on the training needs of small businesses. A key objective was to convince SME managers of the need to integrate vocational training into the firm's overall business strategy and its human resources management.

The project took the manufacturing sector in metal works and mechanics as its guinea pig. All the firms in the study (17 in France, 8 in Germany and 11 in Italy) had fewer than 250 employees.

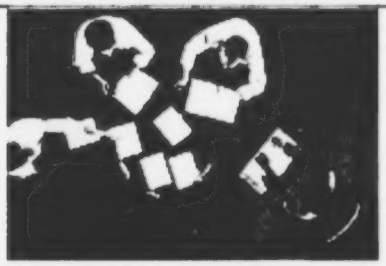
The first step was to draw up a profile of human resources management within the firm: key-skills, multi-skills qualifications, organisation chart, age pyramid, etc. The profile was compared with best practice in the sector, thus enabling a diagnosis of the skills needed to fill any gaps identified and a training plan to be developed.

The most important tool was a self-diagnostic questionnaire that helped participating SMEs assess their human resource practices in comparison to those of others in the same sector. Another key element was a five-point benchmarking scale, based on information from industrial SMEs in the three participating regions. Using this benchmark, participants were able to draw up the most appropriate plan of action for their organisation.

Range of innovative assessment tools

The end of the project in December 2000 saw the successful development of a range of innovative tools to help SMEs self-assess their strengths and weaknesses, and to compare them against benchmark indicators of best practice in human resources development. The results also included operational tools to help a firm identify the skills it needed, and work out a targeted training plan to meet those needs.

As the model is adaptable to the highly-focused work-demands of SMEs, smaller companies can use it to implement vocational training as a strategic tool within the organisation.



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Training of entrepreneurs

European Masters in Multimedia – Building skills for the knowledge-based economy

Multimedia technologies can transform many common business practices – communications, sales, training, marketing and even the work process. Yet small and medium-sized businesses often find that a shortage of skills in the workplace is a barrier to use of these tools.

Audio-visual production, music, information management, platform design and communications skills – people proficient in all these areas are needed for the knowledge-based economy to develop. Although major enterprises can afford to buy-in the expertise they need, SMEs find that the costs are prohibitive and thus cannot use multimedia as much as they would like.

A programme valid across Europe

The 'European Masters in Multimedia' project was launched to counter this skills deficiency. The objective was to create a multimedia training programme, valid across Europe, that would incorporate the latest communication and e-learning technologies as an integral element of the syllabus.

The creation of such an international programme required close cooperation between the various academic and business institutes involved in the project across the EU. Specialists in teaching, art, technology and finance all participated at various stages in the course development.

The project partners designed a modular training programme, developed a methodology for setting up multimedia courses and produced a training package suitable for distance learning. Each of the partners then adapted the core curriculum to their own national business and learning environments.

Three distinct degree courses have been developed: the European Masters in Cyber-communication, the European Masters in e-Commerce and e-Business, and the European Masters in Interactive Multimedia Business Projects (Mediastart). Each syllabus comprises nine modules. The student must complete at least 400 hours of work to complete the course, followed by an eight-week work-experience phase within an appropriate company.

Now an established curriculum

'The European Masters in Multimedia is now an established curriculum at eight universities and training institutes across Europe', says Professor Jean-Dominique Seroen, in charge of the programme. 'New online course material currently under development includes the fields of financial management, web script design, e-business strategy and web marketing.'

The course combines classroom teaching, practical work and web-based distance learning. The content (multimedia technology, graphic design, web information search, project management, etc.) is available on the Masters' programme web site, with access limited to registered students.

Completing the full degree programme takes one or two years on a part-time basis, depending on the individual's starting level. Participants also have to defend a final personal project before being awarded the Master's degree.

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Quality control

Helping SMEs prepare for environmental certification

The pressure on commercial enterprises to ensure they stay 'clean' environmentally has increased steadily in recent years, as both citizens and States have demanded better protection for their surroundings. Modern enterprises are expected to be efficient and competitive on global markets, yet, at the same time, demonstrate 'good citizenship' in matters of safeguarding the environment.

Companies of all sizes are encouraged to push for environmental certification, and the ISO 14000 standard in particular, in order to demonstrate that they incorporate environmental protection thinking into their decision making.

Yet achieving the ISO 14000 standard is no easy matter. While larger companies can afford to dedicate whole teams to the task, SMEs cannot because they are constrained by their natural lack of resources. In addition, key staff may have no understanding at all of environmental protection and may need training in the fundamentals of the subject.

Training in environmental standards

This lack of resources within SMEs was the problem that the partners in the 'environmental self-certification' project intended to confront. Launched under the Leonardo da Vinci programme in 1996, the project aimed to produce a set of materials that would enable key staff in SMEs to learn about the ISO 14000 environmental standard, train themselves in the techniques required to meet that standard, and prepare the company to apply for certification.

The project partners began by developing a set of learning materials that employees could work through in order to educate themselves on the standard. They then focused on the means for integrating the content from this self-learning documentation into the daily work process, thus facilitating learning and continuing training.

Designated employees use the materials first to understand the requirements of the environmental certification process themselves, then use those same materials to educate others in the company. The materials include not only a full set of training slides and instructions, but also the worksheets that enable SME staff to evaluate the company's environmental performance and show where improvements are needed.

The content is divided into three areas:

- legal and environmental issues;
- management issues;
- substance and energy flows.

Tried and tested system

By the close of the project in 2000, the partners had produced a training and evaluation tool for environmental certification that is available on paper, CD-ROM and the Internet. Available in English, German, Norwegian and Slovak, the tool provides SMEs with all the learning, training and assessment materials that a company needs to prepare itself and its employees for ISO 14000 certification.

The tool has already been used with success by SMEs within the food and energy supply industries. Project manager Roland Kuras of Power Solution emphasises its practical nature. 'We now have a set of well-developed materials that we can use in cooperation with companies seeking environmental certification. And these materials are not just theoretical, but are tested and proven in the market'.

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Ongoing projects with a focus on SMEs

Country	Year	Number	Title	eMail – Web site
AT	2000	124014	Tourismusqualität 2002 – Further qualification and specialisation of skilled workers in the hotel and catering trade.	Mtatzreiter@bfi-sbg.or.at
BE	2001	110363	MIGMAG ICT – Innovation and quality improvement in theoretical-practical vocational training of MIG/MAG welding by ICT	Robert.vennekens@soete043.rug.ac.be www.bil-ibs.be
BG	2000	132022	Promoting international case research and training on management of change	Mdbc@chamber.rousse.bg
CY	2002	133202	Organicmed – Training Mediterranean farmers in organic crop agriculture	
CZ	2000	134075	TELM – *Training for the European Labour Market*	paulw@risc.upol.cz
DE	2000	112279	E-business support in a joint approach – Utilisation of company personnel resources for competence transfer among SMEs	GFuchs@gfq-wiesbaden.com
DK	2000	111029	Genesis – Capacity building for entrepreneurship management	bch@aua.auc.dk
ES	2001	115565	SME-TIC – New applications for innovation and employment	Lourdes.gonzalez@ader.es www.ader.es
EE	2002	135004	Qalspell – Quality assurance in language for specific purposes	
EL	2000	114186	Entrepreneur – Developing leadership and management skills of owners and managers of SMEs	Epimevia@hol.gr
FR	2000	117077	Increasing SME competitiveness by quality training and individualised online monitoring	Vgremont@ifcil.com
FIN	2001	126609	Pro-Europass – Apprentices across the border	Sari.turunen-zwinger@edu.hel.fi www.edu.hel.fi
HU	2002	136012	Platpro – Developing plant protection vocational training material for SME farmers	
IT	2000	120156	Smodise – Development of simplified didactic methods to teach English to executives and managers in small and medium-sized enterprises	Sanavia.andrea@alpifin.it
IE	2000	119217	STAMP – Advanced professional training for human factors practitioners in aviation maintenance	Nmcdonld@tcd.ie
ISL	2002	130122	Protocol 2 – Programme and materials for the training of language and communication auditors of European SMEs – Stage 2	
LU	2002	122003	DIPS – Distance learning approach applied to enhance introduction of intellectual property rights in management strategies of enterprises	
LV	2002	138009	Training in RT – A new approach to training for quality in European rural tourism	
NO	2000	131095	ANTRA – Establishment of a dynamic web tool to assist SMEs in self-assessment of ICT (e-business solutions) competence and training needs	Oyvind.laderud@agderforskning.no
NL	2001	123135	Placement support – Development of support materials for foreign placements in SMEs	n.j.a.ruepert@rocu.nl www.rocu.nl
PT	2001	125207	Training SMEs for e-business – Training of SMEs in the development of e-business knowledge	cnm@ismai.pt www.ismai.pt
PL	2001	140430	ETNA – A European training needs assessment for small and medium enterprises	mistia@mistia.org.pl www.mistia.org.pl
RO	2000	141124	ISSD 2000– Improving skills for the development of SMEs	cdimm@mail.alphanet.ro
SE	2000	127025	TRAM –Trade management – International vocational training in trade	hasse.karlsson@swedishtrade.se
SI	2002	143017	Innova SME support – Innovative approach to services supporting development of entrepreneurial culture and SMEs	
SK	2000	142217	IMA – Training of master craftsmen in industry	transfer@transfer.sk
UK	2000	129118	FBT XXI – Family business training for the 21st century	pbishop@londonchamber.co.uk

Details of the projects can be found at the following web site address: http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/leonardo/compacc_en.html

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